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ABSTRACT

Two unrelated studies investigated issues in newspaper journalism. The first, a replication of an earlier study, examined whether the priority given by newspapers to reporting local news was warranted. Respondents in three areas of the country were asked to rate their interest in various types of news on a five-point scale. Results indicated that interest in local news was highest in two of the three sites, that respondents defined the geographical area of local news quite broadly, and that news topic was more important than geographical proximity in determining interest. The second study used a model of persuasion theory to examine the effect of editorial endorsements in the 1976 presidential election and 13 local contests. Major findings show that (1) if readers have already decided, endorsements tend to reinforce their views and may even reinforce views opposite those of the endorsement; (2) more educated readers are more likely to be aware of and influenced by an endorsement; and (3) the persuasiveness of editorials is also affected by the circulation and reputation of the newspaper, the clarity of the endorsement, and the support of opposition in the environment. In light of these findings, editors should consider a variety of factors, including the demographic identity of their readers, their own reputations, possible negative effects of endorsements, and the need for maintaining an editorial reputation for clarity and agreeableness. (JL)

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A REPORT FOR EDITORS PROVIDED IN COORDINATION WITH THE NEWSPAPER READERSHIP COUNCIL

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The Public and Local News

By James P. Winter

HIGHLIGHTS: Indiscriminate emphasis of local news may be a mistake. This three-site study found that:

- Overall interest in local news was highest in only two of the three sites studied
- Respondents at all three sites often went beyond their metro region to regional and even state boundaries when asked to geographically define their local news area
- Factor analysis pointed to the primacy and news topic over the geographic proximity of the news item in determining reader interest
- While interest in nearby events is a prerequisite for interest in more distant events, for many the local news concept extends into neighboring counties.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Why Some Editorial Endorsements are More Persuasive than Others

By Roger A. Gafke and David A. Leuthold

HIGHLIGHTS: Some editorial endorsements are highly persuasive while others serve as a "kiss of death." If readers have already decided, endorsements tend to reinforce their views, and may even reinforce views opposite those of the endorsement. The readers likely to be aware of and influenced by an endorsement are more highly educated than the average reader and are not necessarily a random sample of all voters. The persuasiveness of editorials also is affected by the circulation and reputation of the newspaper, the clarity of the endorsement and the support of opposition in the environment.

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The Public and Local News

By James P. Winter

James P. Winter is a member of the faculty in the Department of Communication at the University of Windsor. *This research was funded by the American Newspaper Publishers Association. The author is very grateful to Dr. Maxwell McCombs, director of the ANPA Research Center, for his assistance and encouragement. Thanks also are due the research directors at the three newspapers in the study who were promised anonymity.*

In recent years newspapers have increasingly shifted to local news as their mainstay, due in part to a reported increase in public reliance on television for international and national news. Generally, editors have felt that the public is interested in newspapers as a local news medium, and if their newspapers are to survive in a television era, it will be through appealing to this public interest in local news.

In their personal ratings of news priorities about 500 staff members at 10 newspapers in eight locations across the United States gave the highest ratings to local news, and the lowest ratings to international news. In listing their perceptions of what readers read, the rank ordering was similar (Burgoon, Burgoon and Atkin, 1982).[1]

Bogart (1981)[2] also reported that, between 1977 and 1979, 40 percent of the newspapers surveyed changed the proportion of local and state news versus national and international news. The shift to local news was greatest for newspapers of under 25,000 daily circulation, with two-thirds of these putting more emphasis on local news.

Despite all of this activity, there has been little effort to explain the concept of local news. What do newspaper readers mean by "local" news, and is the general emphasis in this area warranted?

McCombs and Winter (1981)[3] addressed the former question in a study of 1,200 upstate New York residents and found that news topic rather than the geographic proximity of an event defined reader interest.

The current study is a replication and extension of that study, using three diverse locations. The first site was a Midwestern state surveyed in a statewide poll with about 1,200 respondents. Second, about 400 residents in a mid-Atlantic city with a population of 500,000 were surveyed. Finally, 1,000 residents of a three-county area in the Southeastern U.S. were polled in the fall of 1981.

The studies were conducted by individual researchers from newspapers in the three areas and were coordinated by the author. The surveys involved random sample selection methods and telephone interviews.

Results

To explore the question, "How important is local news?," respondents at all three sites were asked to indicate their interest in various types of news—local, state, national and international—on a five-point scale ranging from "not at all interested" to "extremely interested." In two of the three locations Table 1 shows that the mean ratings were highest for local news, a finding which only partially bears out the reasoning for generally increasing emphasis on local news by newspapers.

In the mid-Atlantic city, the degree of interest diminished with increased distance, but the relationship was not monotonic at the other two sites. Interest in international news was fourth in two of the three sites, but tied for third at the remaining site. In the Midwestern statewide poll, most interest was expressed in national news, with local news coming second.

Table 1

Mean Interest Ratings in Types of News*

	SITE		
News Type	**Mid-western**	**Mid-Atlantic**	**South-eastern**
Local	70	84	80
State	68	80	74
National	74	74	76
International	68	68	72

*Figures have been converted from a five-point scale to a 100-point scale.

To determine what geographic area respondents associate with local news, they were asked an open-ended question. While the diverse communities surveyed made for slightly different coding categories, the results in Table 2 are even more disparate than expected. Collapsing the geographic categories into the most equivalent groups possible, it appears that respondents from different areas apply different geographic criteria to their definitions of local news. Generally, however, respondents look farther afield than was anticipated, with about a third of the respondents in the Midwest and mid-Atlantic locations and 60 percent of those in the Southeast viewing either their entire county, region or state as "local."

Replication

The original McCombs and Winter study used factor analysis and Guttman scaling techniques to

indicate the primacy of local news *topic* over the geographic *proximity* of the news item in determining reader interest. That study examined 1,200 respondents in rural upstate New York. This study replicates that analysis using 1,000 respondents in a three-county, Southeastern, urban market.

Table 2

Geographic Proximity of "Local News"

	SITE		
News Type	**Mid-western**	**Mid-Atlantic**	**South-eastern**
City or smaller	5%	23%*	31%
Metro +	3%	37%	7%
County/Region/State	32%	29%*	60%
"Doesn't Matter" (only asked at the Midwestern site)	59%	---	---
"Don't Know/Other"	1%	11%	2%

*Note: The City/County category was combined at the mid-Atlantic site and the combined proportions have been evenly split for the purposes of this table.

Aside from the differing geographic locations, the only differences in the two studies revolve around the news topics selected for analysis. It was felt that local news topics of interest will vary from market to market, and as such the choice of topics was left up to local editors in both studies.

Respondents were asked to rate their interest in four kinds of local news topics each of which contained four varying degrees of proximity, extending their immediate neighborhood to nearby counties. A five-point scale ranging from "not at all interested" to "extremely interested" was used.

All 16 items were entered into a factor analysis using principal factoring with iteration, varimax rotation, and listwise deletion of missing values.

The factor analysis yielded four factors, each structured on the basis of news *topics*. The factors, listed in Table 3 are: 1) education and school news; 2) business and finance news; 3) leisure activity and entertainment news; 4) crime news.

Hence, as with the McCombs and Winter study, the current study found that local news is primarily defined by topic rather than geographic proximity. Otherwise, the factors would have represented various degrees of proximity rather than news topics.

As with the previous study, a geographic dimension was introduced through the use of Guttman scale analysis. A Guttman scale is a cumulative measure composed of items of decreasing ease or popularity. That is, persons who have passed or endorsed the final item in the series have passed or endorsed all preceding items as well.

For respondents to be interested in education news from neighboring counties, for example, is it necessary for them to express interest in education news from their immediate vicinity? Does interest in each of these four types of local news begin with high interest in events close to home and decline with increasing geographic distance?

Table 3

A Factor Analysis of Audience Interest in 16 Kinds of Local News

Factor One		
Education and School news from your:	Loading	$\bar{X}$
A. Neighborhood	.94	3.1
B. City or town	.96	3.0
C. County	.97	2.9
D. Nearby counties	.90	3.2
Variance Explained = 45%		
Factor Two		
Business and Finance news from your:	Loading	$\bar{X}$
E. Neighborhood	.92	3.2
F. City or town	.96	3.1
G. County	.96	3.1
H. Nearby counties	.89	3.1
Variance Explained = 21%		
Factor Three		
Leisure Activity and Entertainment news:	Loading	$\bar{X}$
I. Neighborhood	.91	3.1
J. City or town	.95	3.0
K. County	.95	3.0
L. Nearby counties	.86	2.8
Variance Explained = 18%		
Factor Four		
Crime news from your:	Loading	$\bar{X}$
M. Neighborhood	.83	4.0
N. City or town	.94	3.9
O. County	.94	3.8
P. Nearby counties	.80	3.6
Variance Explained: 16%		

The analysis reported in Table 4 shows that each of the four factors exceeded the requirements for the Guttman scale procedure. Interest in the immediate surroundings is a necessary condition for interest in more distant, but still local, news.

Referring back to Table 3 for an item key, the description of each news category, we see in Table 4, for example, that interest in neighborhood education and school news (A) is antecedent to interest in education and school news from the city or town (B), which

Table 4

Cumulative Readership of Local News

Education and School news	% of Respondents
A* only	1.2
A + B	1.3
A-C	5.3
A-D	32.1
None	57.1
Errors	3.0
Total	100.0

*These letters refer to the news categories listed in Table 3.

Coefficient of Reproducibility = .993
Coefficient of Scalability = .981

Business and Financial news	% of Respondents
E only	0.6
E + F	0.8
E-G	3.6
E-H	32.1
None	57.7
Errors	5.2
Total	100.0

Coefficient of Reproducibility = .987
Coefficient of Scalability = .965

Leisure and Entertainment news	% of Respondents
I only	2.0
I + J	2.7
I-K	4.8
I-L	24.7
None	61.4
Errors	4.4
Total	100.0

Coefficient of Reproducibility = .989
Coefficient of Scalability = .966

Crime news	% of Respondents
M only	4.2
M + N	3.4
M-O	9.2
M-P	58.6
None	19.0
Errors	5.6
Total	100.0

Coefficient of Reproducibility = .986
Coefficient of Scalability = .951

is prerequisite for interest in education and school news from the county (C), and which is in turn antecedent to interest in such news from nearby counties (D).

The results of this Guttman scale analysis bear out the findings both of the previous research and of the results reported earlier in this study. Earlier it was noted that in response to the open-ended question on respondents' conception of local news proximity, many individuals at all three sites thought of regional and even statewide news as "local." Similarly, the Guttman scale analysis tells us that while for some individuals "local" news is rather narrowly defined, for others the concept extends countywide, and for still others it extends into neighboring counties.

Conclusions

In general, this study suggests that indiscriminate emphasis on local news is a mistake. There are four major reasons for this conclusion contained in the findings of this study.

First, overall interest in local news was highest among the four news types—local, state, national and international—in only two of the three sites studied.

With respect to this point, it could be argued that there is a certain social desirability in showing interest in national and international affairs, and that this might lead to inaccurate self reports of interest. It could be, however, alternately argued that the pressure to express an interest in the *local community* is even stronger.

In terms of self-report honesty, one encouraging finding from the Southeastern site is that crime news received by far the highest interest ratings among the listed topics. This was true despite the obvious social desirability of expressing interest in, for example, education news instead.

Second, when asked to define geographically their local news area, many respondents at all three sites went beyond their metro region to regional and even state boundaries.

Third, factor analyses in this and the previous McCombs and Winter study indicate the primacy of local news topic over the geographic proximity of the news item in determining reader interest.

Finally, the Guttman scale analysis indicated that, while interest in nearby events is a prerequisite for interest in more distant events, for many individuals the local news concept extends countywide, and even into neighboring counties. □

Footnotes

[1]Judee Burgoon, Michael Burgoon, Charles Atkin, "What is News? Who Decides? and How?" Preliminary Report, American Society of Newspaper Editors, Newspaper Readership Project, May 1982.

[2]Leo Bogart, "Press and Public," Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, N.J., 1981, p. 242.

[3]Maxwell McCombs and James Winter, "Defining Local News," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 3:1, October 1981, pp. 16-21.

Why Some Editorial Endorsements are More Persuasive than Others

By Roger A. Gafke and David A. Leuthold

Roger A. Gafke is Professor of Journalism and David A. Leuthold is Professor of Political Science, both at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Conventional wisdom about the effect of editorial endorsements is divided. The extensive efforts by candidates to win endorsements by newspapers suggest that at least some people believe endorsements result in many votes on election day. Other people doubt that endorsements are worth much, noting that Franklin Roosevelt won four terms despite widespread newspaper opposition. Some political consultants believe that endorsements in certain circumstances may actually cost candidates votes and in effect be a "kiss of death."

The research reported here used a model from persuasion theory to examine editorial endorsements in the 1976 presidential election and in 3 local contests. The model suggests that the effect of editorial endorsements be studied by concentrating on characteristics of the sender, the message, the recipient and the environment.

In this project, the characteristic of the sender which was tested was the editorial prestige of the newspaper, the characteristic of the message tested was the clarity of an endorsement, characteristics of the recipients tested were their awareness, understanding and acceptance of the endorsements, and characteristics of the environment tested were the presence of conflicting or reinforcing endorsements by newspapers and by the reference groups to which respondents belonged.

Major Findings

Among the major findings from analysis of these local and national studies of editorial endorsements are:

- Among voters who already have made up their minds, a contradictory endorsement actually may reinforce their decision.

- Endorsements in bottom-of-the-ticket races (lesser offices and ballot issues) are more persuasive than endorsements in major races.

- Many voters are unaware of newspaper editorial endorsements. Those who do become aware are by no means a random sample of all voters or readers. Readers with more years of education are more likely to read and remember editorial endorsements.

- As respect for a newspaper's editorial integrity increases, so does the percentage of persons voting in the recommended direction.

- The presence of conflicting or reinforcing endorsements from other sources in the environment, such as other newspapers or voters' social groups, affects the persuasiveness of editorial endorsements.

Study Design

Data for this analysis were drawn from the 1976 national presidential election survey conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. Interviews were conducted with a national probability sample of 1,909 respondents, before and after the election.

Data also were drawn from three election-day surveys conducted in Columbia, Missouri in 1975 and 1976. The two daily newspapers, the Tribune and the Missourian, endorsed candidates and propositions. Neither newspaper was partisan and neither took a consistently liberal or conservative stand. In each survey, trained student and volunteer interviewers, assigned to a random sample of precincts, interviewed voters as they left the polls.

The dates of the surveys, the contests in which each newspaper had made an endorsement and about which voters were asked, and the number of respondents were as follows:[1]

1. April 1975, nonpartisan mayors race, 583 respondents
2. April 1976, nonpartisan school board race (2 contests, 4 endorsements), 373 respondents
3. August 1976, primary election, with interviews being conducted in a proportionate random-sample of rural precincts as well as Columbia precincts;
   a. Democratic primary, nomination for sheriff, 497 respondents. (Also included was the nomination for United States Senator for which the Tribune made an endorsement but the Missourian did not.)
   b. Republican primary for sheriff, 142 respondents
   c. All voters, vote on Constitutional Amendment Number 7, a parochial school aid issue, 639 respondents.

The use of data from both national and local surveys, and from surveys in different election contests increased the number of opportunities to test hypotheses drawn from persuasion theory. The national survey provided only one measure of the editorial's influence, the extent to which the voter voted in the recommended direction, but the local data provided a second measure which was also helpful,

the voter's estimate of whether the editorial endorsement had influenced the voter's attitudes.

Reactions by Readers

As it has developed, persuasion theory has ascribed increasing importance to the reactions of the readers, an importance epitomized by the title of Raymond Bauer's famous article, "The Obstinate Audience,"[2] an article which summarized findings of various research projects on persuasion theory. Bauer noted that people who have already made up their minds on an issue are likely to resist persuasive attempts, and may even become more set in their ways as a result of an attempt to persuade them otherwise.

That hypothesis can be tested with data about endorsements for Carter and Ford in the 1976 national election survey. Voters who favored Carter in the pre-election survey were asked in the post-election survey about the endorsement, if any, of their newspaper, and their actual vote in the election. The percentages of pre-election Carter supporters who actually voted for him in the election were:

> 97 percent among those who were aware that their newspaper had endorsed Carter (n = 123);
>
> 87 percent among those who were aware that their newspaper endorsed neither candidate (n = 62);
>
> 97 percent among those who were aware that their newspaper had endorsed Ford (n = 58).

The clear implication is that a Ford endorsement reinforced Carter supporters as much as a Carter endorsement did. The pattern was similar, though less pronounced, for Ford.

What about readers who had not yet decided on their presidential vote? In the 1976 national survey, 90 percent of the voters had made up their minds at the time of the pre-election interviews in September and October, leaving, for analysis, too few cases of readers who were undecided and then became aware of their newspaper's endorsement. In the Columbia surveys, when voters were asked after the fact, only 1 to 2 percent said they were undecided when they learned of the endorsement.

Presumably newspaper endorsements made before voters have decided can help them decide, and thus have an effect other than reinforcement. The data on when voters decide come largely from presidential elections, and indicate that some voters, especially the party faithful, decide before the nominating conventions, that many decide soon after the conventions, and that a few, though an increasing proportion, decide during the autumn campaign. In contrast, about 85 percent of the editorial endorsements were published in the last 10 days of the campaign.

Bottom-of-the-Ticket Races

Though clear supporting data are not available, an impression among political activists and observers is that voters decide later on bottom-of-the-ticket races than top-of-the-ticket races, later on ballot issues than on candidate races, and later in nonpartisan races than in partisan races. Therefore the persuasiveness of endorsements, among those who are aware of them, should be higher in each of the former than in the latter cases.

This hypothesis can be tested by data from the Columbia primary election, in which questions were asked about the endorsements by the Tribune for a constitutional amendment, for sheriff and for U.S. Senate. The Tribune's endorsements should have been more persuasive on the ballot issue than on either of the candidate races, and on the lower-level sheriff's race than on the higher-level U.S. Senate race.

That was, in fact, the case. Among those who were correctly aware of the endorsements, those who said they were more likely to vote in the recommended direction constituted 80 percent on the ballot issue, 15 percent on the sheriff's race, and 9 percent on the U.S. Senate race.

Another possible explanation for the difference with regard to the ballot issue is that voters rely more on endorsements for ballot issues than for candidates. This argument is made by two professional campaign managers, Herbert M. Baus and William B. Ross, in their book, *Politics Battle Plan*.

Awareness of Endorsements

Readers influence the persuasion process not only by their "obstinance," to use Bauer's phrase, but also by their lack of awareness. While many were reinforced, even more never became aware of an endorsement. In the 1976 national election survey, about one quarter of the respondents did not follow the campaign in a daily newspaper, and many who did were unaware of endorsements. As a result, only 38 percent of the voters were correctly aware of the endorsement or lack of endorsement by the newspaper they read. In the Columbia surveys, an average of 23 percent of the voters knew correctly the endorsements they were asked about.

Those who do become aware are by no means a random sample of all voters or readers. Readers with more years of education are more likely to read and remember editorial endorsements. In the national

survey, the proportions who were correctly aware of what their newspapers had done ranged from 25 percent for those with less than a high school education to 55 percent for those with college degrees. In the Columbia school district election, the proportions correctly aware of the Tribune endorsement varied from 2 percent of those with a high school diploma or less, to 33 percent for those with post-graduate education.

Negative Effects

This combination of voter reinforcement and of greater awareness by more educated voters helps provide explanations for the two "kiss of death" editorials found in these case studies. (The term "kiss of death" is an overstatement because our best estimate is that the editorials cost the candidates no more than one percent of the total vote, but nevertheless the editorials did have a negative rather than positive effect.)

In the 1975 Mayor's race, the Tribune endorsed Bob Pugh, who won, suggesting on the surface that the editorial had been influential. (Many previous studies of editorial endorsements have in fact used just this measure.) Furthermore, the interviews with voters found that a majority of voters aware of the Tribune's endorsement had voted for Pugh. However, when voters were asked if the endorsement had made them more likely or less likely to vote for Pugh, respondents saying less likely were found to be more numerous. Education was a significant factor, in that more educated voters were more likely than less educated voters to be supporting Pugh's opponent, to be aware of the editorial endorsement, and to say that the endorsement had an effect on them, either positive or negative, but in this case more often negative.

A similar pattern was found in the 1976 race for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate, with more educated readers being more likely to support the opponent, to be aware of the editorial, and to be reinforced in their opposition by the editorial.

Circulation and Reputation

While readers' awareness and predispositions are the most important factor in the persuasion process tested in this project, other factors also have effects. One factor is the circulation and reputation of the newspaper.

Not surprisingly, voters are more likely to be aware of the endorsements of newspapers with larger rather than smaller circulation. In Columbia, the Tribune has more than twice as many subscribers as the Missourian. That difference also was found in two of the election day voter surveys, with 73 and 82 percent of the voters saying they subscribed to the Tribune, compared with 35 and 33 percent of the voters who said they subscribed to the Missourian. In the six races in which both newspapers made endorsements, the median percentage of voters who were correctly aware of those endorsements was 25 percent for the larger circulation Tribune and 10 percent for the Missourian.

Persuasion theory posits that more prestigious senders are more persuasive than less prestigious senders. Data in two of the surveys allowed a test for this hypothesis, namely that voters are more likely to be influenced by the editorial endorsements of newspapers with which they more frequently agree, or newspapers for which they have higher respect.

In the school board race, respondents were asked: "With regard to editorials in the Tribune/Missourian, would you say you usually agree with them, usually disagree with them, or that you just don't read them?" The proportions who said they were more likely to vote for at least one of the candidates endorsed by the Tribune were 33 percent for those who usually agreed with the editorials, 21 percent for those who usually did not read or did not know how they felt about the editorials, and 0 percent for those who usually disagreed. Comparable figures for the Missourian were 36 percent, 8 percent, and 10 percent.

In the 1976 primary election, voters were asked a different question: "Whether you usually agree or disagree with the editorials in the newspaper, how much respect would you say you have for the editorials in the Tribune: A high amount of respect, a medium amount, or a low amount?" Using responses for four of the endorsements by the Tribune in the two primaries, the median percentage who were more likely to vote in the recommended direction was 27 percent for those with high respect for the editorials, 18 percent for those with medium respect, and 4 percent for those with low respect, among those who were accurately aware of the endorsements.

Clarity of Endorsement

Persuasion theory also places emphasis on the message as a factor affecting influence. Data available in these surveys allow a test of the hypothesis that clearer endorsements are more persuasive than unclear endorsements.

In the Columbia school board race, the Tribune endorsed the incumbent board president for one seat. For the other seat, the Tribune endorsed one candidate, but indicated that either that candidate or one opponent would be satisfactory. Such a thoughtful endorsement is not surprising in a world of shades of gray, rather than black and white, but it does lose effectiveness. In the election day survey, 25 percent of all respondents knew that the Tribune had endorsed the incumbent president, but only 18 percent

correctly knew the other endorsement. In fact, 6 percent thought that the newspaper had endorsed the other acceptable candidate.

Effect of Environment

Persuasion theory posits that the effectiveness of persuasive efforts also depends upon the environment, the surrounding circumstances. The Columbia surveys provided two different measures of the effect of the environment.

The first measure involved the presence of conflicting or reinforcing endorsements from other sources. If voters were aware of two conflicting endorsements, the influence of each was apparently reduced, judged by the vote decisions. In the four-candidate 1975 mayorality election, the proportion of respondents who voted for the candidate endorsed by the Missourian was 66 percent for voters who knew only of the Missourian endorsement, 46 percent for voters who knew of the Missourian endorsement and the conflicting endorsement from the Tribune, and 35 percent for those readers who knew of the endorsement of neither paper. The comparable percentages for the candidate endorsed by the Tribune were 69, 53 and 55.

The effect of reinforcing endorsements was indicated by the surveys in the school board race and the 1976 primary. In four cases, the newspapers endorsed the same candidate. In three of those cases, respondents who knew of both endorsements were more likely to vote in the recommended direction than respondents who knew of only one endorsement. The median percentages voting in the recommended direction were 87 percent when voters knew of both endorsements, and 72 percent when they knew of only one.

A second measure of the effect of environment available in these case studies was based on the impact of the voter's religious group on a religiously based issue. Religious groups, like family, friends and work groups, can affect the environment, providing a context—reinforcing, conflicting or neutral—in which the endorsement is received.

The available example involved an issue on the 1976 primary election ballot to provide aid to parochial and private schools, an issue strongly supported by Catholic clergy, strongly opposed by the Missouri Baptist convention, and avoided by most other religious groups. Both newspapers urged defeat of the proposal, a position consistent with the Baptist position. If we assume that voters were influenced by their religious environment, we should expect that the editorial endorsements would have some moderate positive effect on most voters, a greater positive effect on Baptists, who would have the reinforcement of their religious group, and possibly even a negative effect on Catholics who would be reinforced in the opposite direction.

Comparison within each group of the votes of those who were aware of the newspaper endorsements and those who were not aware showed those patterns. Catholics aware of the endorsements were less likely to vote in the recommended direction than Catholics who were not aware, a pattern similar to the negative reinforcement that pro-Ford editorials had on pro-Carter voters in the 1976 presidential vote. The findings should be regarded as tentative because the numbers of respondents are small, too small to allow for control of other intervening variables that might also provide an explanation.

That pattern, however, suggests that the influence of an endorsement will increase or decrease in relation to the size and the strength of approval or disapproval from reference groups in a community. It also suggests that editorial endorsements that run counter to strongly reinforced, community-wide norms may have an overall negative impact and be counter-productive.

Conclusions

Data from the national survey of the 1976 election indicated that increased reinforcement of supporters of each candidate was offset by the increased reinforcement of opponents, so that neither candidate emerged with an advantage. In the Columbia surveys, examining the impact of 13 different endorsements, our best estimate is that endorsements increased the vote in the endorsed direction by an average of 2 percentage points. The variations in persuasiveness were substantial, and the 13 endorsements studied included the two "kiss of death" endorsements which had a negative effect.

The use of persuasion theory has helped focus attention on the variety of factors which determine the influence of an editorial endorsement. The findings from the tests that we were able to conduct provide the following suggestions for editors who wish to increase the persuasiveness of their editorial endorsements.

- Editors should be aware of the characteristics and presuppositions of editorial readers, who may not be representative of the general population.

- Editorials which run counter to readers' predispositions may simply reinforce readers' views opposite to the editorial position.

• Editors should nurture their editorial reputation for credibility and agreeableness, increase their circulation, reprint their endorsements, or take other steps to make voters aware of the endorsements.

• Editors should present their endorsements as clearly as possible, and they ought to endorse as early as possible to reach readers before the readers have decided.

• Editors should try to insure that the endorsements are reinforced by other endorsements, community support, or other means.

• The possibility of a negative influence suggests the paradoxical recommendation that in some circumstances an endorsement left unpublished will be more persuasive. □

Footnotes

[1]Refusal rates were about 30 to 35 percent in each survey, with refusals being associated with age, and highest for elderly people. The data have been weighted by age to compensate for biases from the differential refusal rate. The percentage of the vote for various candidates or propositions in the unweighted survey data was within 3.3 percentage points of the percentage received in the actual election, on the average, with 95 percent of the races being within 6 percentage points. The weighted data were slightly closer. The biases were a little more likely to favor the liberal candidates supported by the young and well-educated voters, who were more willing to be interviewed.

This has been "normal" in many election day surveys, although different techniques, especially the use of pencil and paper questionnaires instead of personal interviews and the use of shorter questionnaires, have enabled the television networks to reduce the refusal rate, although at the sacrifice of a substantial amount of information. The mayor's race and the school board surveys involved personal interviews, while the primary election surveys involved a pencil and paper questionnaire with a follow-up personal interview (necessitated by the complexity of asking about newspaper endorsements). About one third of the people who completed the pencil and paper questionnaire did not give a follow-up personal interview, usually because they said they were in a hurry to go to work or some activity. There were no significant differences between those who gave follow-up interviews and those who did not with regard to age, education, liberalism or conservatism, party, sex or knowledge about the candidates.

[2]Raymond A. Bauer, "The Obstinate Audience: The Influence Process from the Point of View of Social Communications," *American Psychologist* 19 (1964).